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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 381st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 February 2017, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Ms. Ribeira Viotti ..... (Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General)
Chair: Mr. Seck ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda (A/AC.183/2017/L.1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

2. **The Temporary Chair** invited the Committee to consider nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice Chairs and Rapporteur of the Committee.

3. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) nominated Mr. Seck (Senegal) for re-election to the office of Chair, Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia) and Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) for re-election as the five Vice Chairs, and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) for re-election to the office of Rapporteur.

4. **Mr. Mayong** (Malaysia) seconded the nominations.

5. *Mr. Seck (Senegal), Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia), Mr. Gertze (Namibia), Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Mr. Inguanez (Malta) were elected by acclamation.*

6. *Mr. Seck (Senegal) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General

7. **Ms. Ribeira Viotti** (Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General), speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, said that since its establishment by the General Assembly in 1975, the Committee had played an important role in advocating for a just and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on two States. In 2017, Palestinians would enter the sixth decade of occupation. A political horizon towards a two-State solution was slipping away. Meanwhile, in Gaza, Palestinians were subjected to stifling closures. The parties and the international community must act to establish an environment conducive to a return to meaningful negotiations and that would advance the common goals of an end to the occupation that had begun in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition with the State of Israel. The United Nations would continue to strongly support that process. The recent announcement by the Palestinian Government that it would hold municipal elections throughout the country on 31 May 2017, if they could take place both in Gaza and the West Bank, should present an opportunity to renew the democratic legitimacy of the Palestinian leadership and institutions. The Secretary-General encouraged all to participate in those elections.

8. The formation of a single, legitimate, inclusive Palestinian Government, on the basis of the PLO Declaration of principles would greatly contribute to the Palestinian cause. Two years earlier, Member States had adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a universal, integrated and transformative plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity, pledging to leave no one behind. Palestinians and Israelis must be part of that effort and achieve, as they deserved, a future of peace, security and prosperity. The Secretary-General counted on the unique role that the Committee played towards achieving that goal.

Statement by the Chair

9. **The Chair**, welcoming the unwavering commitment of the Organization and its various entities to the Palestinian cause, said that the Division for Palestinian Rights should continue to implement its training programme for Palestinians in order to better meet the needs of an independent and viable Palestinian State. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Middle East had painted a grim portrait in his account of the situation in Palestine. Failure to resolve the conflict incurred serious risks, including violent extremism and terrorism that might target civilians in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere around the world. All actors should therefore be unstinting in their determination to establish a sovereign, viable and independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with the State of Israel, in peace and security, within internationally recognized and guaranteed borders. Reiterating his own commitment to collaborating with Member States to fulfil the Committee's mandate, he called for a return to the spirit of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which had provided for the establishment of two sovereign, independent States.

Statement by the Observer for the State of Palestine

10. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that his delegation welcomed the creative efforts made by the Secretary-General and the Committee to advance the cause of justice for the Palestinian people and, in particular, for the intensification of activities — as the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation approached — aimed at making 2017 the international year to end the occupation. As the Secretary-General had recently

declared in his press conference in Cairo, there was no alternative to the two-State solution, which had been called for in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) and Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) — both texts drafted by the United States of America. A tremendous investment had been made in creating a global consensus on a two-State solution that could only be salvaged by ending the Israeli occupation and paving the way for an independent State of Palestine. Standing firm alongside the Secretary-General and all States committed to respecting that proposition, his Government would not relent in working to mobilize all available collective efforts to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and abide by international law, the will of the international community and the Charter of the United Nations. The Palestinian leadership was committed to upholding the collective will of the United Nations; it would therefore continue to work closely with the Committee in 2017 to end the occupation and establish the independent State of Palestine, the ultimate price of achieving peace in the Middle East.

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

11. **The Chair** said that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, on 29 November 2016, the General Assembly had adopted the four resolutions submitted by the Committee, thus reaffirming the responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine.

12. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council had held a briefing on The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", during which it had adopted resolution 2334 (2016) on the illegality of Israeli settlement, reaffirming its support for the two-State solution. Committee members Malaysia, Venezuela and Senegal, along with New Zealand, had proposed the resolution.

13. On 17 January 2017, the Security Council had held an open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", during which Mr. Djani, Vice-Chair, had delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee.

14. On 31 January 2017, Mr. Inguanez, Rapporteur of the Committee, had represented the Committee in lieu of the Chair, who had been invited but unable to attend, at a workshop on Canada's role in the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict titled "Palestine and Canada: Together we can make it happen". Mr. Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, had also been in attendance.

15. On 4 February 2017, the United Nations Roundtable on the Question of Palestine had been held in Nicaragua under the theme of "Building Bridges with the Palestinian Diaspora in Central America" to strengthen coordination between the diaspora communities in Latin America in support of Palestinian rights. A delegation representing the Committee had attended the event along with Mr. Mansour, Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine.

16. On 7 February 2017, the Committee delegation had held bilateral meetings in Mexico with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commission on Foreign Relations of that country, with a view to promoting recognition of Palestinian statehood.

Draft programme of work of the Committee
(A/AC.183/2017/L.2)

17. **The Chair**, introducing the Committee's draft programme of work for 2017 (A/AC.183/2017/L.2), said that section I listed the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-first session; section II briefly reviewed developments since the submission of the Committee's report and expressed concerns over continuing violations committed by Israel, also noting the Committee's appreciation of international efforts to revive bilateral negotiations and welcoming the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); section III indicated priority issues in the Committee's programme of work for 2017; and section IV contained a description of the planned activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The Bureau would revise the programme of work throughout the year, as necessary.

18. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work.

19. *It was so decided.*

Update by members and observers of the Committee

20. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the United Nations round table on the question of Palestine, held in February 2017 in Managua, had been the first meeting of representatives of the Palestinian diaspora in Central America under the auspices of the United Nations. Representatives of the Palestinian diaspora in Chile and Cuba had also participated, as had the mayors of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, and the Managua Declaration had been adopted with a view to ending the 50-year of occupation of Palestine. The meeting had illustrated the historical ties between and the struggle for liberation of the Nicaraguan and Palestinian peoples.

21. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country had proved its commitment to the Palestinian cause during its term as a member of the Security Council, which had ended in December 2016, by promoting open discussion of the question of Palestine and rejecting the convening of exclusive sessions and the application of double standards. It had denounced the occupying Power's attempts to prevent the two-State solution, the only credible way of ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and establishing an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, by altering the physical character, demographics, territorial continuity, economic viability, religious practices and cultural traditions of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. His delegation had expressed concern in the Council about the stagnation of Israeli-Palestinian talks and the clear intention of Israel to discard the two-State solution, had denounced Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, and the continual Israeli violations of international law and international humanitarian law, and had requested that the brutal and inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel should be lifted. During the Venezuelan presidency, his delegation had promoted the first discussion by the Council of the humanitarian aspects of the Israeli occupation and blockade.

22. His country had called on the Council to assume its responsibilities as the guarantor of international peace and security by condemning Israeli aggression and assessing the possibility of protecting Palestinians under the Fourth Geneva Convention. It had sponsored resolution 2334 (2016), in which the Council had reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. His delegation had supported multilateral and international efforts to bring the parties closer and encourage negotiation, and had expressed its support for the Middle East Quartet and efforts by Egypt, France and the Russian Federation to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The international community must be able to do more than merely live with the solution to the question of Palestine; it must insist on a two-State solution that took into account the Arab Peace Initiative and the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and respected the right of Palestinians to live in their own State, which should have full membership of the United Nations and peacefully coexist with Israel. That State must have internationally recognized borders based on those of 1967 and East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

23. The Palestinian cause was the Venezuelan cause; the two countries' ties of brotherhood and cooperation were unbreakable. The Government and people of Venezuela were making great efforts to promote and defend the Palestinian cause in 2017, which must be the last year of the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian people would with dignity advocate for their inalienable rights, achieve self-determination and acquire full statehood.

24. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that the international community must intensify its efforts to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which would allow the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination, peace and development. The two-State solution, which was the only alternative to the conflict, was under threat from the illegal settlement policy of Israel and from other forms of Israeli colonization and aggression against the Palestinian people. Her delegation condemned the expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly the recent approval by the Israeli Government of 5,500 illegal units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the law intended to legalize settlements retroactively. Those decisions, intended to expropriate and annex Palestinian lands, violated international law, the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions of the Security Council. The prolonged, illegal Israeli occupation must end and the cruel blockade of the Gaza Strip must be lifted immediately and unconditionally. Cuba would support the Palestinian people in reaching their legitimate aspirations, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and full membership of the United Nations. Her delegation would promote the Palestinian cause at the national and regional levels and in the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, and would sponsor resolutions of the Assembly and of the Human Rights Council on the matter. The Committee, guided by its programme of work, must cooperate with international and regional efforts and civil society to achieve peace and allow the Palestinians to exercise their rights.

25. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the mandate given to the Committee by the General Assembly for 2017 included cooperation at the national and regional levels with

Governments, parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations to end the Israeli occupation. To that end, the Committee should follow up on the meetings attended by its representatives in January and February 2017. In Canada in January 2017, he and the rapporteur had met with a representative of a large trade union that had submitted legislation on the question of Palestine in parliament; parliamentarians who were attempting to reconstitute the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group; and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Nicaragua in February 2017, he had met with representatives of the Nicaragua-Palestine Solidarity Committee, who had agreed to mobilize non-governmental organizations to attend the international conference for civil society organizations on ending the 50-year occupation, to be held in June 2017 at Headquarters, and with parliamentarians, who had declared themselves willing to help the Palestinian cause, for example by adopting declarations. At the regional round table in Managua, it had been decided that an international conference for the Palestinian diaspora would be held in Chile in the second half of 2017. After the round table, the mayors of Bethlehem and Beit Jala had visited El Salvador and Honduras. In Mexico and New York in February 2017, he had held meetings with Mexican senators who were prepared to visit the occupied territory and invite Palestinian parliamentarians to Mexico.

26. At every meeting, particularly in 2017, which marked 50 years since the start of the occupation, Committee members should share information regarding initiatives in their countries by think-tanks, universities, parliamentarians and other organizations to strengthen the global network of Governments, parliamentarians, civil society, trade unions, academics and activists. The General Assembly mandate must be translated into action in every country to end the Israeli occupation and settlements and lift the immoral blockade of the Gaza Strip so that an independent State of Palestine could be established and the two-State solution saved. By sharing information at each Committee meeting, members would help bring freedom and dignity to the Palestinian people.

Other matters

27. **Mr. Begeç** (Turkey) said that the Steering Committee established by the Secretary-General to ensure that funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was sufficient, predictable and sustained, of which Switzerland was Chair and Turkey was Vice-Chair, had started work in February 2017 and would submit its findings in March 2017 after consultations and meetings in New York, Washington, D.C., Amman, Jeddah and Geneva. Committee members had until 28 February 2017 to submit their responses to the guidance note distributed by the Steering Committee.

28. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Steering Committee had been established in response to a request in a General Assembly resolution 71/93 for the Secretary-General to report on ways of helping fund UNRWA. Committee members should contribute to the work of the Steering Committee and consider increasing their assessed contributions to the United Nations budget. They should provide creative ideas for stabilizing the finances of UNRWA, which was responsible for the well-being of 5 million Palestine refugees and could play an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in such areas as gender, education, sanitation and health.

29. **The Chair** said that in February 2017 the Division for Palestinian Rights would hold one of its periodic sessions to familiarize diplomats newly arrived in New York with the work of the Committee and the Division. In Beirut in March 2017, the Committee would hold a capacity-building workshop on Sustainable Development Goal 17 for the State of Palestine and south-south and triangular cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.